

# THE BRONX HOSPITAL

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NEW YORK 56, NEW YORK

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February 3, 1950

Dr. Joshua Lederberg  
Dept. of Genetics  
University of Wisconsin  
Madison 6, Wisc.

Dear Doctor Lederberg:

Under separate cover, I am sending you 7 more cultures as possible sources for variants. We have tried to select them as suggested by you. However, as I told you before, our restricted facilities leave us no time to check on these cultures. They are just pickings from well separated colonies from primary stool plates. One of them probably belongs into the Proteus group - it started "swarming". Please let me know, whether you want more cultures of this kind.

*As to your letter of 1/29,*  
I can only say, that we excluded the presence of a 'phage as well as we know how. Even if the phenomenon we observed would be initiated by a 'phage, it would be of great interest - perhaps even more than any explanation by a soluble principle. Imagine a phage forcing a culture to accept a constant biological property from a "donor" via a 'phage and at the same time abandoning the corresponding character it had carried hitherto! However, in view of the difficulties we encountered in duplicating the experiments, and also in view of the fact, that even in the positive experiments only a fraction of the offspring showed transformation, I have difficulties in visualizing such a possibility.

Your are entirely correct in stating that the problem is partly one of definition. If a 'phage becomes just a roving gene, then, of course, you have me. But then I shall have my vengeance: I shall prepare a beautiful paper for next year's Review of Microbiology just by copying yours and exchanging each time ~~you use~~ the word gene for 'phage and vice versa. After that, we are going to submit the case to the international congress for semantics - or, if you prefer, to the U.S. Senate - for arbitration.

Sincerely

*A. J. Weil*  
A.J. Weil



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